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SUBJECT: Serbia: 2006-2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) Part I: Drugs and Chemical Control

II. Summary

Organized crime groups use Serbia, a center point on the Balkan smuggling route, as a transit point for the transfer of heroin, cocaine, marijuana and other synthetic drugs. A small portion of smuggled narcotics remain in Serbia for domestic consumption. As the legal successor to the state union of Serbia and Montenegro, Serbia is party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention. Serbia is developing and enacting new laws and law enforcement initiatives, including the National Strategy for the Fight Against Drugs, but a weak legal infrastructure and endemic corruption will make the fight against narcotics and drug smuggling a long process.

II. Status of Country

Serbia is primarily used as a transit country for the movement of narcotics, but the ability of organized crime groups to exploit the porous borders and weak infrastructure threatens political stability and economic development of this developing country. The Ministry of Interior notes that the Sandzak portion of Serbia, with its capital of Novi Pazar, is most problematic because of its geographical position near the Montenegrin and Kosovo border on the smuggling route and the storage of large quantities of drugs in the region. The Serbian government estimates that a small proportion of narcotics--heroin is the most prevalent--remain in country for domestic consumption.

III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2006

Policy Initiatives. Articles 246 and 247 of the General Crime law regulate countermeasures against drug crimes in Serbia, both for production, trafficking and usage of narcotics. A newly implemented law on Chemical Substance and Production for synthetic drugs, based on European standards, requires the Ministry of Health to monitor the substances acquired and used by foreign and domestic companies operating in Serbia. The law also allows the Ministry of Interior to get approval from the Ministry of Health to investigate certain companies or individuals in possession of chemical substances. A new law on criminal procedures has also been completed that stipulates that narcotics seized should be destroyed except for a small sample to be used in court, instead of stored in often less than secure warehouses by the Ministry of Interior or the Ministry of Justice. Serbia in the meantime is continuing to establish and promote relations with neighboring countries, including Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Hungary and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the transport of narcotics across their common borders.

Law Enforcement Efforts. The Drug Unit in the Ministry of Interior is the central unit that polices narcotics smuggling and usage of heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and synthetic drugs throughout the entire territory of Serbia. The Drug unit is responsible for coordinating cooperation and information exchanges with smaller police units located throughout Serbia as well as with Customs

officials, the Ministry of Justice and Interpol. The Drug Unit is currently trying to create one database with all narcotics-related crimes, arrests and seizures, but a shortage of financial and technological assistance is hampering its implementation. Officers in the Ministry of Interior participate in workshops organized by the OSCE and other international organizations and intends on continuing training exercises with regional neighbors, including Bulgaria and Romania. The Ministry hopes to have these officers who are trained in combating narcotic-related crimes train their fellow officers in the police force and drug unit. The Drug Unit reports that so far in 2006 they have seized around 6.5 kilograms of cocaine, 150 kilograms of heroin, 5 kilograms of hash and 989 grams of Marijuana. This data excludes any information from local police branches. The unit estimates that by the end of 2006, they will probably seize around 1/2 ton of heroin and more marijuana. The Customs Administration of Serbia reports that year to date, they have seized 228 kilograms of heroin, 36 kilograms of ephedrin, 18 kilograms of ecstasy, and fractional quantities of cocaine HCL, hashish and marijuana.

Corruption. Corruption is endemic in Serbia and is prevalent throughout the legal infrastructure of the country. The Serbian government does attempt to prosecute instances of corruption, but because it is so accepted by society, is often hard to identify. There are no reports that senior government officials engage in, encourage, or facilitate the production and distribution of narcotic and psychotropic drugs and there is also no evidence that Serbia, as a matter of government policy, encourages or facilitates illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or actively launder proceeds from illegal drug transactions.

Agreements and Treaties. Serbia became the legal successor state to the state union of Serbia and Montenegro on June 3, 2006 and therefore all treaties continue in force, including the 1988 UN Drug Convention, which was signed on March 12, 2001. Serbia currently has

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a bilateral agreement with Romania for the training of Serbian officers, and has cooperation agreements with Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on border control issues meant to stop cross-border narcotics transfers.

Drug Flow/Transit. Serbia is located in the center of the smuggling and transit route along the Balkan road. Heroin is smuggled from Turkey and moves through Bulgaria into Serbia and then onward into Western Europe. Small amounts of heroin stay in the country, but Serbia mostly serves as a transit point. Cocaine usually comes from South America into Serbia via Spain, Italy and Greece, while synthetic drugs typically originate in the Netherlands and are generally used for trading for other narcotics, including heroin.

Domestic Programs (Demand Reduction). Experts from the Belgrade Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that there are currently 60,000-80,000 drug users in Serbia. A task force of government ministries, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Interior the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education and Sport is developing a National Strategy for the Fight Against Drugs, which incorporates anti-narcotics programs used by neighboring countries, and adheres to EU-regulated standards.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives

The Serbian Government works closely with the United States and EU countries in reforming and improving its law enforcement and judicial capacity. The United States has provided extensive technical assistance, equipment donations and training to the police, customs services, and judiciary. Several U.S. Departments have programs that directly or indirectly support counter-narcotics activities in Serbia, including the Department of Justice (ICITAP), Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, Department of the Treasury, and Department of State. The Department of Justice has also been instrumental in supporting the new Organized Crime Court. The Department of Justice has also been instrumental in supporting the new Special Court for Organized Crime and War Crimes. The programs are aimed at professionalizing the police and customs services, improving the ability of Serbia to prosecute corruption

and organized crime, including money laundering and illicit trafficking, and increasing the ability of the judiciary to effectively address serious crime.

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